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An
Essay
on
Emetics

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admitted March 8. 1819.

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In consequence of some deranged condition of the Stomach, arise not unfrequently, diseases, the most serious and deplorable to which the human system is liable. These are, not to mention many others, Gout, epilepsy, apoplexy, mania, and Fevers of almost every description. As these different diseases are often produced, by certain substances taken in, improper either in quantity, or quality, it becomes necessary that they should be evacuated, or their effects counteracted; To meet each of these indications we have recourse to the process of vomiting, which consists in an inversion of the peristaltic motion of the Stomach, and a spasmodic constriction of its muscular fibres, - accompanied by a contraction of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles -

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Vomiting may be induced by a great variety of means; independent however of all other measures, there is in our possession a set of medicines which have, from the remotest ages of antiquity, been appropriated to this particular purpose, viz. Emetics. These may, according to Dr Murray, be defined, those medicines which produce vomiting, independently of any effect arising from the mere quantity of matter introduced into the stomach.

How Emetics produce the inverted action, above spoken of, is a subject which has excited much speculative controversy in the medical world, but which, like many others of the kind, has never so far as I am acquainted, been satisfactorily explained, Darwin has attempted to solve the problem, by supposing it to be an effect of diminished, instead

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of increased action; he thinks that the pain of nausea and sickness induces debility of the stomach, in consequence of which its natural motions become gradually weakened until finally ~~till finally~~ it stops for a while, when a new and inverted action takes place. How far this may be correct, I cannot determine; I can however venture to assert, that it does not appear to be compatible, with our views of the nature of the substances producing it, some of them being highly stimulant.

The susceptibility of the stomach to the action of emetics, is different, in different persons; owing I suppose to peculiarity of ~~of~~ constitution, and also to the character of the disease. In some diseases, for instance fevers, vomiting is very readily induced; whereas in others, as mania, epilepsy

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apoplexy, or that state of the system induced by opium or other narcotics, it is with difficulty produced, even by our most violent medicines. Generally speaking the susceptibility of a part to the action of a stimulus decreases in proportion to the frequency of its repetition. This however is not the fact as regards Emetics.

Of the use of Emetics in disease.

Fevers.

To remove the cause from the stomach, or counteract the impressions there generated by it, are two very important indications in the treatment of fevers. And to meet each of these we have no medicines superior to Emetics. In the commencement of fevers generally, our medicines I believe are called for, but in intermittent fevers of miasmatic situations

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they are peculiarly efficacious. An emetic exhibited just before the commencement of the paroxysm, I have very frequently known to prevent entirely its accession, or render it milder in all its stages, and of much shorter duration

The Modus operandi of emetics in the cure of fever, has been for a long time a subject of theoretical discussion, and on which there is as yet much difference of opinion; whilst one asserts that they are productive of no advantage unless they nauseate or puke, another as boldly affirms that they are most useful where they produce no nausea at all. Both of these opinions, although so opposite, are said to be founded on the basis of long and extensive experience. Fordyce maintains the latter, Cullen the former, However different the views may be, which these gentlemen

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entertain as to the treatment of the disease after it is formed, I believe they coincide as to the propriety of puking in its commencement.

Hæmorrhages.

In Hæmoptysis emetics have been recommended, and used especially, by Dr. Robinson of Dublin. The propriety of their use has been questioned by some, particularly by Cullen, who abandoned them, from the circumstance of their proving prejudicial in one instance. It certainly would not be difficult to point out cases in which they would be entirely inapplicable, but on the other hand it would I conceive be as easy to find other cases in which they might be useful, and beneficially employed. No one I presume would think of giving an emetic where the hæmorrhage was

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considerable, or of the active kind; but in those cases where the matter expectorated is tinged with blood, the efficacy of the practice cannot be doubted. As Fothergill, in his treatise on emetics, observes, there is nothing perfect and happy in every respect: Emetics have their advantages and disadvantages: nor are these less to be feared than those to be desired if by chance the medicine be given improperly.

As a general rule emetics are not to be employed in Menorrhagia, yet they have according to very good authority sometimes proved beneficial. Dr. Chapman relates a case of this kind in his lectures, in which a spontaneous vomiting was attended with the effect of arresting the hemorrhage.

Cynanche Trachealis. Whether this is a disease sympathetically induced, (as is thought

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by some, or not, the efficacy of Emetics in its cure is indisputable. In cynanche tonsillaris and cynanche maligna, they are employed and not without benefit.

From the expectorant power which they possess, Emetics have been long and extensively used in diseases of the lungs. As they have the power of relaxing and determining to the surface, their efficacy may sometimes, probably, be explained on this principle. In the treatment of Asthma they were introduced by Athenaeus, and they constitute a very important part of the plan of treatment in this disease. Pertussis, or whooping cough, is more benefited by this class of remedies than by any other; to be useful they should be frequently repeated.

Apoplexy.

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of gastric origin is rendered extremely plausible from the causes which produce it, and the symptoms which precede it. Many cases of the disease may be traced to such causes as have made a direct and strong impression on the stomach, as excess in eating, and drinking, &c. Nearly all the symptoms which precede an attack, indicate a diseased condition of this organ, more especially incubus, which is very apt to be an attendant on the disease, when we meet with a case of apoplexy induced by such causes might not emetics be used? and would they not be productive of advantage? Palsy, the pathology of which is thought by some to be analagous to the preceding, has been treated by emetics.

Epilepsy. To treat this disease by emetics is an ancient practice. of this

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we are informed by the following words of Hoffman. "Inveteratam epilepsiam, quæ etiam per XX annos ægrum traxit, curatam novi ab emeticorum, usu, et specificis ant epileptici ex animali regno petitis." But practitioners of the present age acknowledge without reserve the great utility of emetics under certain circumstances, in the treatment of the disease.

Mania, is another disease in which emetics are beneficially employed; but they are by no means called for in every case of this kind. In the more violent forms where there is undue determination to the head, they would be apt to increase rather than sub-dued the violence of the disease. In the treatment of that form of mania which arises from the excessive use of ardent spirits, they are said by Dr. Klopp of this city to be very successful.

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Dyspepsia, when it arises from ~~the occasion~~ as debauchery, excess in eating or drinking, or certain indigestible substances, demands an emetic as the first step towards its cure. The same observations will also apply to the treatment of diarrhoea and dysentery, where they occur under similar circumstances.

Hydrocephalus internus, being frequently preceded by symptoms indicating a disordered condition of the alimentary canal more particularly of the stomach has given rise to an idea of its being a gastric disease. This opinion I believe, was first suggested by Dr. Chapman, After having premised some observations relative to the gastric origin of the disease he adds "emetics are therefore occasionally useful, though I should administer them on a very different principle from that on which they have heretofore been supposed

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to operate; it would be, to make a strong impression on the part in which I suppose the disease to be seated, and not to promote the absorption of effused fluids."

That painful affection which sometimes occurs, as a consequence of injuries done to the scalp, Dr. Physick informs us he has seen more successfully treated by Emetics than by any other remedy. They have also been used in Tic. dolourent, a disease similar to the last mentioned, and not without advantage.

Emetics have been strenuously recommended and very successfully used in some of the affections of the eyes. Gutta Serena Richter informs us, has been entirely removed by this plan of treatment. It was his practice to evacuate the stomach by an active Emetic, and then to administer small doses of some Emetic article, ~~for~~

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which he continued for a considerable length of time.

In concluding my observations on the use of Emetics, it would be proper for me to remark, that there are many other diseases, in which they are occasionally prescribed, and with equal if not superior advantages. Of these there are a great variety which come under the care of the physician, and several under that of the surgeon. To enter into a specific consideration of each of these, however, would be foreign to my purpose; it would also constitute a task, which I by no means consider myself adequate to perform.

Dr.

Draupad Dyanand

Dr.

Emile Medicus

Dr.

James Eckenthey

Virginia

Dienstag, den 4. Juni 1878